CM 302 175 their hair but rather pull out all the hair on the fore part of their heads, about four fingers in width. And some of the Mataguayes tear out the hair from the center of their heads, forming a sort of crown, which is why they are called "coronados" ["crowned ones"--Translator]; the Mataguayes Churumatas, on the other hand, have the same coiffure as the Tobas and Mocobíes.

CM 175 72 [266] "While the men, at nighttime, occupy themselves with roasting the flesh of their enemies over a fire in order to give them a rational grave in their brutish bellies, the old crones, who are mostly witches and are venerated as priestesses, are usually present and sing all or most of the night of victories over their enemies or doleful songs about the dead. But if they have had bad fortune in war not a word is heard on their return in all the hamlets or villages which had a part in the misfortune, a strict silence being observed as a sign of sadness and all is attributed to sundry omens. They continue in this melancholia for some days until, little by little, they start to forget and begin to come out of their shacks. Then the relatives of the dead begin to incite the others to vengeance; and it is an inviolable law that those relatives are to lead the others, exposing themselves to the greatest dangers; but they are not to return to the place in which they suffered the defeat because, as they imagine, if they fight there they will certainly be overcome once more.

CM 175 [241] [273] "They do not grow crops but live entirely on what they hunt and fish, to which end they wander through the forests and along the rivers. On returning home the common thing is to get drunk with wine which they make from wild honey or from the pods of the algarrobo. Their drunkenness lasts until they run out of provisions at which time they sally forth once more. If they should have a free moment they devote it to making weapons for war. Some of them, such as the Mocobíes and Aguilotes eat, in addition to what they hunt and fish, roasted or boiled locusts. In all other things the men of every one of these Indian nations make the women work for them, and this is quite hard for they (the women) must cut firewood and take it home on their shoulders even if they are also suckling a child. They must also fetch water from the river. In all things the men are hard on their women, to the extent that when on the road the husband will ride a horse while the wife and young child [578] must go afoot. Nor is the mother more tender towards her child for as soon as it can use its legs she makes it walk so that she may carry the dog, who keeps them company, in her

CM 175 462 [482]

C M 175 462 [846] arms. It is true that all this work which the Indian women must perform is made more tolerable by the fact that they are very strong and robust. Proof of this robustness is what they do as soon as they give birth: going to the river or stream with their newborn child they go into the water and swim about and wash themselves thoroughly, and do not experience the least harm as a result. However, should the husband capture a woman from some Indian nation or from among the C M [595] Spaniards, her life is spared so that she may serve his wife as a slave, and him as a concubine—but he must be secretive in his relationships with the captured woman for the wives are extraordinarily jealous and will make things difficult for the husband should he make advances C M 175 [164] towards a Spanish woman. . . .

"Smallpox is a great scourge to these nations, and makes terrible inroads into them because they have no doctors other than the C M [764] old fakers, and if the latter do not cure the sick person, and they usually don't, then all will abandon him to his fate. When anyone dies, those who happen to be present open up a grave for him on the very spot, bury him stretched full-length, stick a spear into the ground over his resting place and hang a Christian's or some other enemy's skull on the C M [771] shaft's end; then they desert the place and never return to it while memory of it lasts. Not even a trace of religion has been found among them, rather are they perfect athiests without the least knowledge about the afterlife or the immortality of the soul. They have a certain re- C M 175 756 spect for their female witchdoctors, more out of fear of what they may do to them than from any good they may hope to receive from them. These witchdoctors try to make the others believe that they hold in their hands the power to heal or to make sick, and these are the ones who resist the Gospel most vigorously, using their influence to keep their followers from receiving Holy Baptism or allowing their children to receive it, and persuading them that baptism will kill them. To this end, to bolster their arguments, they take advantage of what happens in any mission post when the missionaries only baptize those who are about to die, and as the Indians then usually see such a person die, the noxious error becomes more firmly rooted in their untutored minds." "Descripción del Chaco" [Chorographic Description of the Chaco] page 82.

C M 114 This account by the Missionary Fathers is confirmed by what has been observed by travelers who have visited these same Indians in more modern times, even in the present day. [579]

533 his waist from which hang a number of shells, claws, little horns,
222 teeth and similar trifles, beats on that rustic drum day and night without ceasing and, with the continous movement of his body, makes the trinkets about his waist rattle all this accompanied by a song or rather a lugubrious and high-pitched shouting which can be heard at a great distance. This ridiculous performance is not a simple demonstration of rejoining but rather, in their opinion, a rite necessary to hasten the ripening of the longed for and beneficent fruit."

"When a woman arrives from the forest laden with fruit, roots
222 262 or other eatables, all the other women of the village crowd to her hut and she, after having set aside enough for the sustenance of her family, distributes the rest, the other women not saying a word of
[626] showing any sign of appreciation. Were she to refrain from giving away her surplus, it would cause the greatest displeasure, and might even provoke some dangerous quarrel."

"The Mataguayos are timid and cowardly, but vengeful in
181 the extreme. They never forget an offense—sooner or later they will
[671] be avenged. The law of requital is unbreakable for them. They avoid making war when this is possible, but if they are attacked they
[411] defend themselves. Their most common weapon is the arrow."

"They recognize no authority and no law. The child obeys
593 its parents if it wishes to and the latter, though they may love their children, have no power at all over them. Nevertheless one does not generally encounter lack of respect toward the old or toward the unfortunate." [594]

"The men busy themselves with fishing and only very rarely
462 indulge in hunting. Their agricultural activities are limited to the
[241] sowing of a few clumps of pumpkins and watermelons. With the
[283] juice of the latter they make <u>aloja</u>. Some of them also devote their time to making thin ropes of agave fiber with which they construct their nets."

"All other work is done by the women. She must not only prepare the food but also fetch fruit and roots from the forest; not only bring water but also chop firewood; not only look after the cleanliness of the hut but also make it. In one word: she is a slave."

"When a girl reaches nubility she is hidden in a corner of the
881 hut and covered with fronds and rags. It is illicit for her to speak to anybody or taste meat or fish for a determined length of time. Meanwhile a drummer goes through the same ceremony in front of her

leather bracelet, which they continue to wear until, it is said, they give it to the first man who wins their favor. They knit shirts out of twine or in double thickness, very closely knit and yet elastic, which look like coats of mail and have no sleeves, and are garnished in various patterns with pieces of clam shell. These shirts are particularly useful [181] in their fights and as protection against the thorns of the forest, but the Indians have only a few of them.

Other ornaments are made of feathers, especially of the ostrich [rhea--Translator], with which the women deck their foreheads, waists, shoulders, wrists and ankles. The men put on much the same gear when they are about to fight, go to feasts or to treat a sick person, as will later be shown.

The women themselves also weave the wool gathered from the few sheep they possess and arrange the natural wool colors in regular patterns of stripes or squares. They do not know how to make more ornamental figures.

In order to weave they stick four forked pieces of wood into the ground in the form of a rectangle, place a pole across each end to which they affix the warp threads and with a wooden blade about a hand breadth long thread and tamp the wool into place.

They call "weaving " potzin; the "loom" noccalĕi, and the "threads" huolĕi. These words, which have not the least affinity with the corresponding Spanish words, assure us that the Indians did not learn weaving from the Spaniards -- not that one should lay great stock either by similarities or by the lack of them in words to buttress a judgment of this nature (on the contrary, it happens that the Mataco always do all they can to keep from adopting foreign words to express new things, preferring to use their own words with small changes) but the fact of the matter is that we are not here confronted by one of these circumlocutions. Another possible cause for error might be found in the great difficulty which they have to pronounce words as we do. Furthermore there is the habit of taking Spanish words and modifying them to suit their own language as when they make from "cabra" [goat--Translator] caila, and from Pedro, Peilŏ.

All work having to do with carrying, making tents, making pots, cooking, weaving, looking for roots and making nets, is women's work. Hunting, fishing, the making of weapons, warring, are men's business. Looking for honey in the forests, where it is abundant, and collecting fruit are activities common to both sexes. I suppose that

this shared work has its cause in that the last two mentioned products must necessarily be gathered within a certain limited period and therefore the Indians have need of the combined effort of all the workers they can muster in order to harvest all they possibly can.

For the making of nets they must first, naturally, begin by making twine, which they call niñ'hiôi. They get their textile material from a bromelia which in Quechua is called châguar (a name now also used by the white settlers) and in Mataco hñié. They steep the leaves of this plant in water for a time and then comb them with a clam shell. Once this has been done the residue is put out into the sun to dry and whiten. The last stage is that of twisting the fiber -- a wad of it is held in the left hand and rubbed back and forth [182] on a leg, upon which they sprinkle a little gypsum in order to avoid getting hurt. This gypsum powder is called maccotâc-muc.

The twine being thus ready they make not only nets with it but also ropes, which they call niñ'hioi-less, which means family or skein of threads.

Some of the Indians have special skill in making weapons, and make them as a means of barter with their companions. They use a very hard wood for the bow, and ostrich [rhea--Translator] tendons or strips of hide for the string. The arrow shaft is made of cane, the head of some hard wood, often tipped with bone and barbed like a fish hook.

Chapter V

Marriage Customs

Those who do not know anything about the Indians may believe that they lead morally and materially sterile lives. Yet this is not actually the case: the savage loves, hates and knows what ambition, enjoyments, dangers and glory are. He is acquainted with religion and with fear. In these primitive societies the whole gamut of human affections is experienced precisely "as among the whites," as Faustino used to say to me when I asked him about the intimate experiences of the Indian way of life.

Women are with them, also, a most important attraction or passion; and although a white person may consider her position an unenviable one as he sees her traveling beside her man under a huge load while he carries only his weapons, yet she is not treated any worse than the immense majority of women in our midst -- those women in our society who are able to pay others to work for them make up a numerically unimportant exception. 462

Furthermore when the Indians are on the move they are ever on the lookout for game and must be continually wary lest they be attacked. How then could the men be in a position to attack and also to defend themselves if they were loaded down by all their belongings?

The woman's role in Indian society is in perfect accord both with social needs and with her physical aptitude. She does not hunt, fish or fight, but takes care of the home, cooks for the family, and is always at work: She looks for roots and fruit in the forest; soaks chăguar leaves in water and spins twine from them; makes nets, bags and weaves; prepares food, repairs the home, ferments the beverages which the men drink; takes care of [183] provisions; helps her spouse in planting by placing seeds in the holes made in the skimpy trenches; takes care of the harvests...and is mother to her children.

In all the Indian camps which I have visited I have always been surprised at the continual round of labors performed by the women, who are always at work. In Mataco, "woman" is tziná and also quiécua or chécua, this last word also meaning "wife."

A man may have several wives, but only rarely does he have them all living under the same roof. The number of wives depends upon the husband's wealth and ability to support a number of families. There is no such thing as real wealth among these nomads, only wealth in movable possessions, if we may call them that, such as skins, cattle, and the ability to work and steal which the man may have. 595 422 556

Very few, possibly none, of the chiefs have only one wife. The wife may be repudiated and in that case can again call herself her own mistress; but only rarely does she remarry because it is usually the case that she has already lost her youthful attractions, because she does not give up hope that her husband will take her back, and because she is kept from so doing by the shame she would feel before the tribe. When a man repudiates his wife this almost always leads to quarrels and feuds between the families. 586

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Chapter V.

Position of the women. Division of labour.

The influential position of the women among the Chaco Indians has already been touched upon. The facts mentioned as to the »mother-right» prevailing among these Indians, the right of the Choroti and Mataco women to propose marriage, etc. give us to understand that the social position of the Chaco woman is by no means that of an oppressed slave, as it has sometimes been described by superficial observers. Even the Tobas, in spite of comparatively frequent divorce, hold their women in high esteem, as may indeed be inferred from one of their myths about the origin of the women. It is therefore impossible to subscribe to the opinion expressed by Campos with special reference to the Tobas when he says that »the women, as has been stated by all, are the yoke-carriers of the house; they are the slaves and not the comrades of the men». Only a passing traveller, who has not had an opportunity to study the social conditions of the natives properly, can arrive at such an opinion. It is true that matrimonial relations are not as ideal among the Tobas as among the Choroti, where women have the right to choose husbands and wholly dominate the family life. Among the Tobas it may happen — as would never happen among the Choroti — that a husband beats his wife, either because he is bad himself or because she has proved unfaithful and tried his patience too much by her jealousy; but such cases are rather exceptions than the rule; generally the Toba husband treats his wife with kindness and affection.

The division of labour between the sexes prevailing in the Chaco as in other parts of South America, easily gives a superficial observer the impression that the women are treated by the men as inferior and subjugated beings. The home industries, especially spinning, weaving, and pottery-making, are wholly in the hands of the women. They not only have to do

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

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462 the general domestic work, but in particular to collect and carry home wild roots and fruit from the forest as well as fire-wood and water. Thus every afternoon one can see the women returning home laden with heavy burdens of fuel or of algaroba or other fruits, carried in large net-bags. The hardest workers in all tribes are the older women. At any rate I noticed that the younger married Toba women shunned the heaviest work, for instance the carrying of fuel, leaving this to the older women of the family. As to agriculture, both sexes take part in it, but the men do the rough work, felling the trees and clearing the ground. The domestic animals, that is to say, the goats, sheep and fowls, are left to the care of the women. The men, in addition to the rough work they perform in agriculture, reckon fishing and hunting as their main occupations. the Toba men being also frequently occupied in warfare, which is a real profession among these Indians. The armadillo, which is regarded by the Tobas as a »female» animal, is the only game caught by the women.

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This division of labour is very strictly observed. It is not an accidental institution, nor due to the desire of the men to oppress the weaker members of society and to compel them to do such kinds of work as they do not, for one reason or another, like themselves. It is, as it were, founded upon the nature of things and in some cases connected with the animistic ideas of the natives. A man would be ashamed to do work which according to custom is incumbent on the women, and similarly a woman would seem ridiculous did she perform a man's work. A European who notices for instance a Choroti family when about to move, and sees the wife laden with an enormous burden of things belonging to the family, and perhaps a sucking child in addition, whereas her husband goes free and disengaged, only carriyng his bow and arrows, might easily arrive at the conclusion that the Choroti husband treats his wife like a slave; but the conclusion would nevertheless be wrong. The husband must have his hands free among other things to be able to defend the family with his weapons against venomous snakes or other dangers threatening it on the way, or to hunt. The women themselves look upon this state of things as being perfectly natural.

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The industry which is characteristic of the Indian woman in the Chaco as elsewhere in South America is thus by no means an expression of her inferior social position. The work she does is not compulsory but voluntary and must be wholly explained by the conditions of life which have developed among the Indians. Mr. Grubb, who during his long stay among the Chaco Indians acquired a perfect knowledge of their

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI 12

psychology, is quite right when he points out that in reality the men do their fair share of the work, although it is not seen to such advantage as that of the women. Thus fishing and hunting which are the chief occupations of the men are by no means a pastime or recreation, but a serious, onerous, and often dangerous undertaking; and the same of course, in a still higher degree, holds true of warfare.

As to the Toba woman, her independent and influential position appears in its way from the right she possesses to decide about the future husband of her daughter; as we have seen, the mother's consent is particularly required. The women also show their influence when raids against other tribes are planned, exciting the passions and revengefulness of the men. And in all tribes the women serve as permanent and self-elected arbitrators. When quarrels arise at the drinking-feasts, which is not unfrequently the case, and threaten to develop into sanguinary fights, it is the women that allay the agitated feelings and separate the fighters, thus preventing more serious calamities.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

We have already seen that the most appreciated of these drinks is algaroba beer, which by the Mataco and the Choroti is called *atās*, by the Tobas again *maplyí*. The tree itself and its fruit is called *oáh* in the Mataco and the Choroti language, in the Toba language *map*. The sacred beer is prepared with the utmost care and with certain religious or magical ceremonies. At this preparation there appears a strict division of labour between men and women. Although the women are not allowed to drink of the beer, they seemingly perform the larger part of the work. They collect the fruit in the forest, carrying it home in their large caraguatá bags, and afterwards mash it in mortars. Some old women start to chew the fruit, mixing it well with saliva, whereupon they spit it out into a goat's hide, fixed in the ground by means of sticks in such a way that it forms a sort of vessel. The goat's hide is used by the Choroti and by the Argentine Mataco, whereas the Tobas and the Bolivian Mataco use a wooden trough for the purpose. Lastly, hot water is poured over the mashed fruit.

These preparations require nearly a whole day. The most essential thing still remains, namely the fermentation, and to effect this is a duty solely incumbent on the men, since women as a rule do not take part in conjurations. The fermentation is sacred, because it means the birth of the good spirit. Now this happens in the night, but night is the time when evil spirits move about. According to the belief of the Indians, the invisible persecutors appear in great numbers in order to prevent the birth of the good spirit and interfere with the drink so that it cannot ferment and is entirely spoiled. Therefore special precautions must be taken for the critical time. The brewing of the algaroba beer for the great festivals during the algaroba season is — especially among the primitive Choroti — a matter that concerns the whole community. Hence, at the approach of night, the men arrive from all houses with their rattle gourds, sit round the hide or trough, and begin to chant a noisy, monotonous song without words, shaking the rattles in the rhythm of their chant. This ceremony is called by the Choroti *nissammaha oáh*, by the Tobas *niapilák map*, and its most conspicuous object is to prevent the spirits from spoiling the beer. Since the new moon is believed to promote fermentation, a moonlight night is preferably chosen for the ceremony. The chant is typical of the Indian conjurations in the Chaco. It is always begun in a loud voice; then the voice gradually dies down, so that the last tones are only heard as a low and distant muttering. Thereupon they start again from the beginning, and so forth. In addi-

5: Fock E-5 (1962) 1963 SI7 Mataco SI7

Mataco Marriage

By Niels Fock

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caraguatá* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *alaja* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *asutshe;* sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also